

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.S. EDITION

**HHS's Thompson Faces Angry Crowd At AIDS Meeting**

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838 words

10 July 2002

The Wall Street Journal

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English

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BARCELONA, Spain -- Activists stormed the stage at the International AIDS Conference here, temporarily halting an address by Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson.

Yelling "Shame, shame," the protesters carried signs accusing the U.S. of the "murder and neglect" of people with AIDS. They believe the U.S. is giving too little money to the global AIDS fight, now estimated to require about \$10 billion annually.

Mr. Thompson continued his speech, though it was inaudible because of the jeers and whistles. Afterward, he defended the U.S., saying no prior administration or foreign country had done as much on the issue. "The U.S. can't do it alone," he said, noting that current U.S. spending for AIDS overseas is about \$1 billion, including research.

Mr. Thompson said expenditures would rise, with the administration seeking to spend another \$300 million next year, though that increase has yet to be approved. "I think we can probably get to \$2.5 billion by 2005," he said, but only if the administration sees "results."

The \$2.5 billion figure is the target that many advocates have urged for the U.S. Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs, speaking here, said the U.S. actually should be spending \$3.5 billion in 2003 on the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, including \$2.5 billion to the United Nation's Global Fund alone. "Massive confusion by the world's most important donor" is how Mr. Sachs described U.S. efforts to fight AIDS, and he also criticized U.N. agencies.

"We will meet the objectives of the protesters," Mr. Thompson said, "but not the way they want." A few hours after the protest, he met with about 10 U.S. activists. One of those at the meeting said he seemed "pretty sympathetic."

Still, the secretary's vision for combating AIDS differs from what activists and many developing nations are demanding. Most notably, he defended patent protection for medicines, even in poor countries that might be able to buy generic versions of the same drug for far less. He also stood firm against using federal funding for needle-exchange programs, even though his top scientist, Anthony Fauci, said scientific evidence shows that such programs slow the spread of HIV without promoting drug use.

While Mr. Thompson said "morality" and abstinence are key to preventing the spread of the virus, he also said that condom use is included in federal programs abroad. He expressed concern about the high rate of HIV among young African-American gay men and the fact that most of those who carry the virus don't know it. He said he has asked the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to mobilize a large outreach program to encourage black gay men to get tested and to reduce racial health disparities generally.

But mostly, he highlighted the administration's new, \$500 million initiative to prevent HIV-positive pregnant mothers from infecting their babies in 12 African nations and the Caribbean. Activists charged that this program is too narrow, because it doesn't offer immediate treatment to the mother and father, and so could create legions of orphans. But the secretary countered that the program will be a springboard for just that kind of comprehensive treatment, though he gave few specifics and no timetable.

The last U.S. secretary of health to attend an AIDS conference, Louis Sullivan, was also booed and taunted by activists in San Francisco in 1990. Dr. Sullivan, sitting in the front row and speaking over the bedlam, characterized the protest as "mindless advocacy." Mr. Thompson, on the other hand, seemed to be trying to

turn the protest to his political advantage. "No other secretary [of health] has had the courage to come back since then," he said.

After Mr. Thompson left the stage and still-chaotic crowd, Global Fund director Richard Feacham took the podium, calling for massive infusions of cash for the fund and vowing to account strictly for the money.

Some Bush administration officials are using a classified intelligence report to bolster the case for more funding, according to a senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The study, prepared by the National Intelligence Council, which reports to the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, predicts an avalanche of infections in some of the world's largest and most strategically important countries, especially China, India and Russia. The council, stressing the potential political instability the epidemic could bring, forecasts 50 million to 75 million HIV infections in those countries alone by 2010, numbers even grimmer than those put forth by U.N. agencies.

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Michael M. Phillips contributed to this article.

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Question of the Day: Is the pharmaceutical industry doing enough to provide AIDS drugs to poor countries? Visit [WSJ.com/Question](http://WSJ.com/Question) to vote. Also, see complete coverage of the International AIDS Conference in the new Health Industry Edition in the Online Journal at [WSJ.com/health](http://WSJ.com/health).

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